



Olivia Kabell

## **Introduction**

Prior to TTU's MATC program, my aims have always been centered in thoughtful, detailed communication as it relates to an ever-increasingly globalized world. Even so, in the course of this program, these aims have crystalized in the form of practical, real-world skills through various projects and classes.

Through a mixture of rhetorical and practical classes at TTU, I've been able to establish a broad, sturdy foundation for my technical communication skills. With this rhetorical base as my springboard, I've then been able to dive into areas of specialty that interest me—from editing, to writing to design—all with an emphasis on creating “effective technical documents”<sup>1</sup> with respect to their audience's cultural, academic, and technical backgrounds.

## **Artifact 1: *Bridging the Divide***

This report concentrates on collaboration between Western and East Asian authors in the instance of creating technical documents (i.e., a report or similar). A simple reality of a globalized economy means that “analyz[ing] and respond[ing] to...the differing goals and agendas of audiences, organizations, and societies”<sup>1</sup> is vital to collaboration—especially when culture is an added layer to these complexities.

In this report, I collect prior research and, after evaluating the existing literature, isolate and highlight key points of importance. By grounding these points in wholistic rhetoric, I was able create thoughtful principles to keep in mind when creating effective documents. The result is a reference sheet of questions, designed to provide communicators with various “rules of thumb”, as it were, to help them “[d]emonstrate sensitivity to the ethical, professional, and cultural issues that face technical communicators.”<sup>1</sup>

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## **Artifact 2: Bridging the Divide Infographic**

This infographic artifact's goals dovetail closely with the report by the same name. However, in contrast to the written guide included in the report itself, this infographic streamlines the report's major points in a more visual, easily accessible format. A decision tree allows the same information to take a more direct and action-oriented form—ideal for the task-minded technical communicator who may not have time to absorb the nuances of the entire report and “justify[ing] user-centered approaches to technical communication.”<sup>1</sup>

Not only does this infographic reinforce this information by example—using the very principles it discusses to reinforce their effectiveness—but this artifact also allows me the space to utilize non-written “communication technologies and media appropriate to users and situations.”<sup>1</sup> In this case, that takes the form of graphic design.

## **Artifact 3: “Rice Pudding” Page Spread**

This artifact demonstrates my skills in several categories, including both writing and design. The spread focuses primarily on the layout and presentation of technical information, keeping in mind both conventions of the genre and the intended audience. The context of the project was a larger, collaborative academic project, focused on translation and localization of a technical document—in this case, a recipe for rice pudding.

The original document was written in Basque for an audience of hospitality staff—in the context of a hotel or restaurant. The new audience was a home cook reading American-English, which entailed various language, layout, and measurement system changes to ensure sensitivity towards the audience.<sup>1</sup> As I was working with a team of technical communication peers, my role also involved keeping the master page spread file up-to-date with the changes to ensure a polished final document, throughout various iterations of the project.

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## **Artifact 4: Edited Scientific Article**

This artifact once again emphasizes the skills I have built in terms of editing within a multicultural or international space. The author of this piece is notably a non-native English speaker, thus the minor errors expected of any document prior to editing are prone to different patterns or categories for a native English writer versus a non-native English writer.

This article's editing markup—courtesy of Word's "tracked changes" feature—demonstrates my skills in terms of editing, particularly with consideration to the cultural issues that might face technical communicators<sup>1</sup> when creating documents that span across different languages and cultural backgrounds. A brief memo is included as well, and in it, I detail the changes made over the course of the assignment, along with resources for the author that are appropriate for the situation<sup>1</sup>, given the most frequent errors.

## **Artifact 5: Self-Publishing Report**

This artifact provides me an opportunity to demonstrate my skills in document research and creation. In it, I collected several examples of national or local self-publishing options (i.e., options that do not involve a literary agent), and evaluated these options according to a weighted decision matrix. After a brief discussion of the decision matrix's categories and category weights, I dove into a thorough review of the data, culminating in several bright graphics to reinforce key points of my conclusions.

This project allowed me to use research and communication skills built in rhetorical contexts and apply these same skills in a very practical scenario. In some ways, it represents a majority of the skills I've acquired with the MATC program: making use of appropriate media and technologies to enhance communication, employing user-centered methodologies in the design, and creating an effective and useful document, justified by firm rhetorical theory.<sup>1</sup>

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## **Closing Thoughts**

While I don't particularly plan to pursue the rhetorical side of technical communication following my time at TTU, the courses offered in the MATC program have given me an appreciation for it I didn't have prior. My practical application could not exist without the rhetorical framework on which it rests—something imparted to me through engaging projects and academic assignments throughout my courses. The greatest value, I've found, lies in that bridge; finding ways to make use of rhetorical frameworks in everyday work and in academic pursuits, with the ultimate goal of becoming better, stronger technical communicators.

## **Sources Cited**

"Master's in Technical Communication," Department of English, Texas Tech University, last modified April 27, 2023, [https://www.depts.ttu.edu/english/programs\\_degrees/ma/tc/index.php](https://www.depts.ttu.edu/english/programs_degrees/ma/tc/index.php).